

TWIN CITY LINES

Fall 2018





Streetcar photos from the 1920s and 30s are scarce, so when this one showed up for sale on Ebay, we jumped on it. Shot through the windshield of an automobile in 1927, it shows the busy retail heart of downtown St. Paul. The camera is looking north on Robert Street at the intersection of 7th Street. The street is flanked by two big department stores, The Emporium on the right and Donaldson's on the left.

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P. O. Box 16509
Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509
(952) 922-1096

www.trolleyride.org

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Aaron Isaacs, Editor
3816 Vincent Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55410
612-231-8989

aaronmona@aol.com

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The Minnesota Streetcar Museum operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis and the Excelsior Streetcar Line in Excelsior. Its mission is to preserve Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

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Corrections and new info

In the Spring 2018 issue, Art Abrahams was left off the list of volunteers who have worked on Winona #10.

In the Summer 2018 issue, car 1267 was built at Snelling Shops, not at 31st Street Shops.

On page 8 the upper left photo was donated by Doug Anderson. The motorman at right is his grandfather Ole.

Worst Halloween ever

Halloween was always a headache for streetcar companies, but nothing compared to what happened in 1933. Here's the newspaper account.

The police were doggone sick and tired of it by midnight. They were run ragged Tuesday night by the most destructive Halloween the city has experienced in years.

It started with calls of the wild at dusk and continued through the night, with countless calls for the cops. Veterans on the force said they had never seen anything like it before.

There were riots, clubbings, stonings and individual battles in which the participants squared off with their fists. Street cars were derailed, their windows smashed and emergency crews put to flight when they attempted to put the cars back on the rails. There were emergency calls for tear gas. Rioters were rounded up by the dozen and loaded into patrol wagons.

Whole Force on Duty

At some street intersections police had to cope with gangs of boys, large

and small, the numbers of which ran from several hundred to more than a thousand.

Every policeman, every detective and all motorcycle patrolmen were on duty during the night. They spent their time rushing from one corner to another in an effort to hold down the property damage. Police headquarters and fire headquarters were besieged with hundreds of telephone calls from citizens who demanded immediate assistance in driving off hordes of hoodlums. Only a small percentage of the calls brought responses because there just were not enough call cars to go around.

At midnight it was estimated that at least 500 hydrants in the city had been opened and streets flooded. Patrolmen dashed about as fast as they could to shut off the water, but the situation soon became almost hopeless. Dispatchers at police headquarters finally pleaded with residents to take monkey wrenches and go out and shut off the water themselves.

Streetcar service was abandoned temporarily in a number of sections of the city, and cars were running from 15 minutes to an hour late most of the night. From 8 PM to midnight service on the 34th Avenue South line was abandoned, the street car company reported. Attempts to keep the line open were prevented by many big blockades crossing the streets.

Car Men Injured

A number of employees of the street car company, including motormen and members of repair crews, were injured, none seriously, when struck by missiles. Early Wednesday the company

still was trying to clear tracks of the barricades.

The worst riot of the evening occurred at 27th Avenue South and 25th Street. A convention of separate gangs was held at that intersection, where the youths gathered nearly every movable item in the neighborhood. They found concrete blocks, sheds, big metal tanks, fences, beds, sections of porches--a little of everything and a lot of some things. They piled the collection high on the car tracks (*The East 25th Street line and the Minnehaha Avenue line crossed at that intersection.*), then tipped over a couple of automobiles to make the blockade complete. They even tried to strip the clothing from a woman apparently to add to the pile. The first police arrived just in time.

Defy Police

The patrolmen said they found at least a thousand boys and youths, ranging in age from 8 to 25, running wild in the area. An attempt to disperse the mob was futile. Emergency calls were sent in, bringing 30 more patrolmen and several carloads of detectives to the scene.

"Go on, now, before we put the run on you" the police yelled.

"Better get a lot of help", the boys replied.

Call for Tear Gas

Then the police began shoving the gang members in an effort to disperse them. It didn't work. A battle started, and there was clubbing and stoning. Another riot call and a request for tear gas guns were sent into headquarters.

It was not until the gangs were

Front cover: Freight-only electric railroads were uncommon in Minnesota, but there was one in the geographic center of the Twin Cities. The Central Warehouse Company employed a single locomotive to service its huge complex of buildings, plus a few adjacent industries. The steplecab locomotive is sitting at the switch for tracks 3 and 4 (see green lines on the map on pages 6-7).

threatened with tear gas and the ring-leaders placed under arrest that police had any success in breaking up the mob. Fifteen of the oldest and toughest hoodlums were thrust into a patrol wagon and jailed. A dozen others were held temporarily, until their parents could take them home and keep them locked up for the rest of the night.

Then came the laborious task of removing debris from the streets so trolley car service and traffic might be restored.

One Call After Another

When police thought they had one gang broken up, there was a riot call from another spot.

From 28th Avenue South and 38th Street (*34th Avenue streetcar line*) another riot call came in. Here too a big blockade had been set up. When street car crews attempted to remove it they were stoned and driven from the scene. They returned only after getting a lot of police protection.

At Cedar Avenue and 35th Street (*where the 28th Avenue and 34th Avenue lines split from each other*) street repair crews were also driven off. Here numerous street cars windows were smashed during the evening.

Another riot call came from Bryant Avenue South and 50th Street (*where the two branches of the Bryant Avenue line split from each other*), where a big gang had put up a barricade. It took six squads of police to break up the mob.

More Blockades

More blockades had been established at 23rd Avenue South and 35th Street (*34th Avenue line*), Cedar Avenue and 38th Street (*28th Avenue line*), Cedar Avenue and 34th Street (*track shared by 28th Avenue and 34th Avenue lines*), Como Avenue Southeast and 23rd Avenue (*Como-Harriet line*), and

4th Avenue South and 42nd Street (*4th Avenue line*).

5-ton Truck Tipped

One of the most completely effective blockades was at 6th and Morgan Avenues North (*6th Avenue North line*). Scores of burly youth tipped a 5-ton truck in the middle of the intersection and right on the car tracks. It required two derricks to right the heavy vehicle and get things straightened out.

A motorman on a northeast Minneapolis line stopped his car just in time to prevent smashing into a concrete mixer that was run onto the tracks.

All in all the street car company had a bad night. Officials said it was the worst Halloween in the history of the company. They were unable to estimate what the total loss to their property will be. Many windows were smashed by rocks, and in one instance a street car roof was piled with timbers. Trolley ropes were torn from their moorings and much time was lost in replacing them.

One of the worst features of the evening, police said, was the number of arc (*street*) lights that were smashed. Large areas of the city were left in darkness after quick forays by the gangs. In many instances the arc lights were lowered to the level of automobile windshields and then extinguished, constituting a menace to life and traffic.

There were several gangs that busied themselves during the evening with saws. They cut down telephone and power poles. Live wires were left lying in the street until repairs could be made.

The city will have to replace many semaphores, since scores were wrecked by the vandals, most of them in south Minneapolis.

40 Fire Alarms

There were 40 fire alarms up until midnight, and most proved false. In some places it was discovered that gangs has set fire to lots where the grass was tall and dry. One garage fire was believed to have been started by boys.

Big Push Starts at 9

The big push started about 9 PM and the calls came fast. Householders demanded something be done about boys carting off their garbage cans, fences and gates. All the patrol cars were needed to prevent garages from being carried off and street cars wrecked. The classic radio call of the evening sent a car to the help of a resident who really was having trouble.

"They are tipping over his house with two-by-fours", was the announcement that went on the air. At 4000 32nd Avenue South it was reported that a gang was "tearing down a building".

Detectives found an automobile in the middle of the street and pushed it to the curb. Promptly a gang pushed it back into the street. When the detectives returned to headquarters they announced sadly they had to put that same automobile in its place five times.

St. Paul also reported its most destructive Halloween in years. Mrs. John Mullarky was injured as a result of an act of vandalism. Youth put an automobile on the streetcar tracks and set fire to it. When firemen were dragging away the car Mrs. Mullarky was knocked down by the tow cable. While she lay on the pavement, the towed auto ran over her.

Central Warehouse

-Aaron Isaacs

Perhaps the least documented electric railroad in the Twin Cities belonged to the Central Warehouse Company. It was located in the St. Paul Midway, just west of the Minnesota Transfer Railway yards, to which it connected. A complicated series of industrial spurs threaded their way like tentacles to reach all of the company's sprawling complex of buildings. In all there were about 2.7 miles of track.

The warehouses were a natural complement to the Transfer's freight yards. Owned in common by all the Twin City mainline railroads, the Transfer was designed to interchange cars among all of them, and terminate loads for the local markets. Naturally warehouses were needed to store off-loaded freight until it could be distributed.

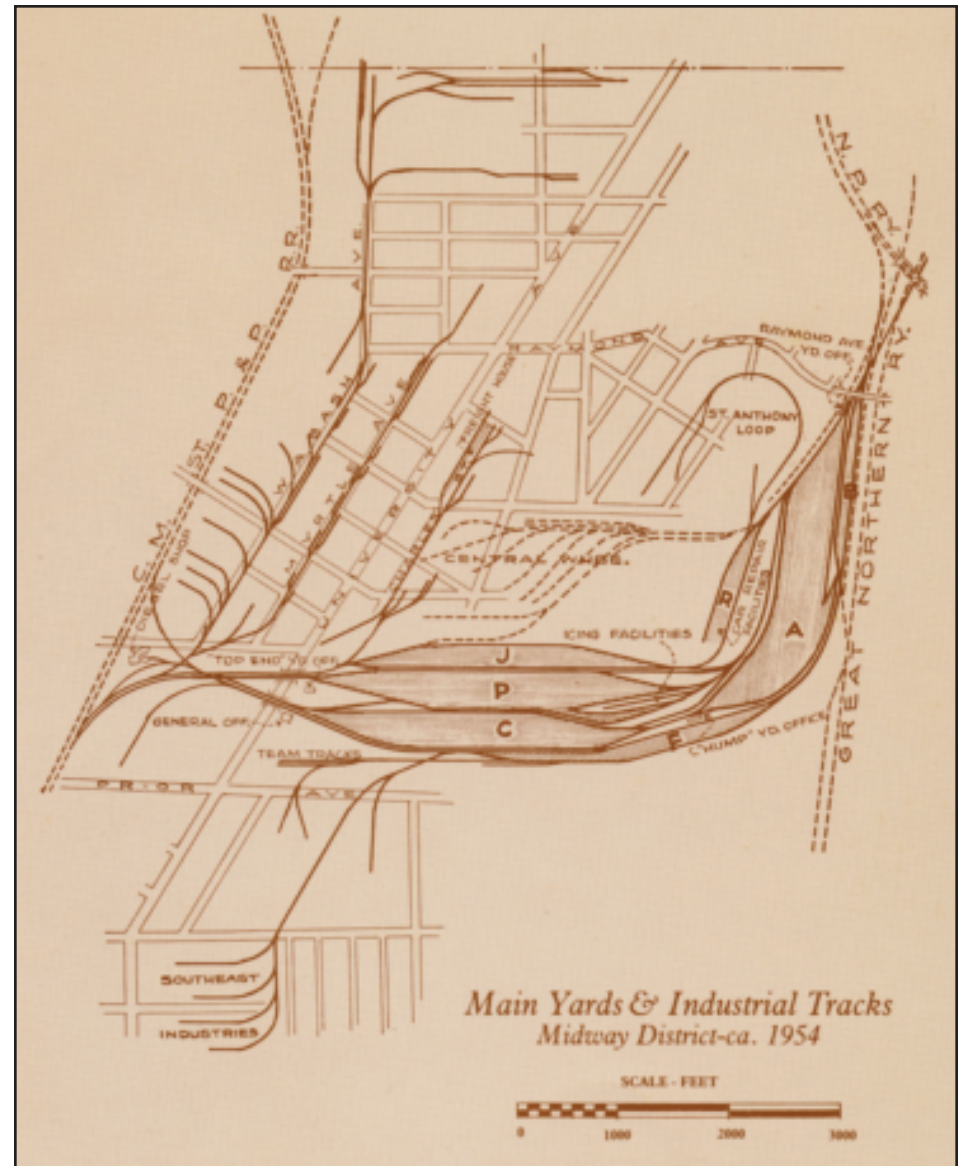
We're not sure when Central Warehouse opened. Russ Olson's research picked up on it in 1916, when Charles Bratnobar became its president. Bratnobar also headed the Minneapolis, Anoka & Cuyuna Range and was the receiver of the Dan Patch line, which had entered bankruptcy. He was familiar with electric railway technology.

In 1917 Central Warehouse acquired gas-electric locomotive #100 from the Dan Patch and used it to replace one or more steam locomotives. Steam required a two-man crew, plus servicing personnel at the enginehouse to keep it hot all night. Dan Patch #100 needed only an engineer, could be shut down when not needed and required far less maintenance than a steamer.

A year later in 1918, the railroad was electrified, and #100 along with it. Central Warehouse also purchased a



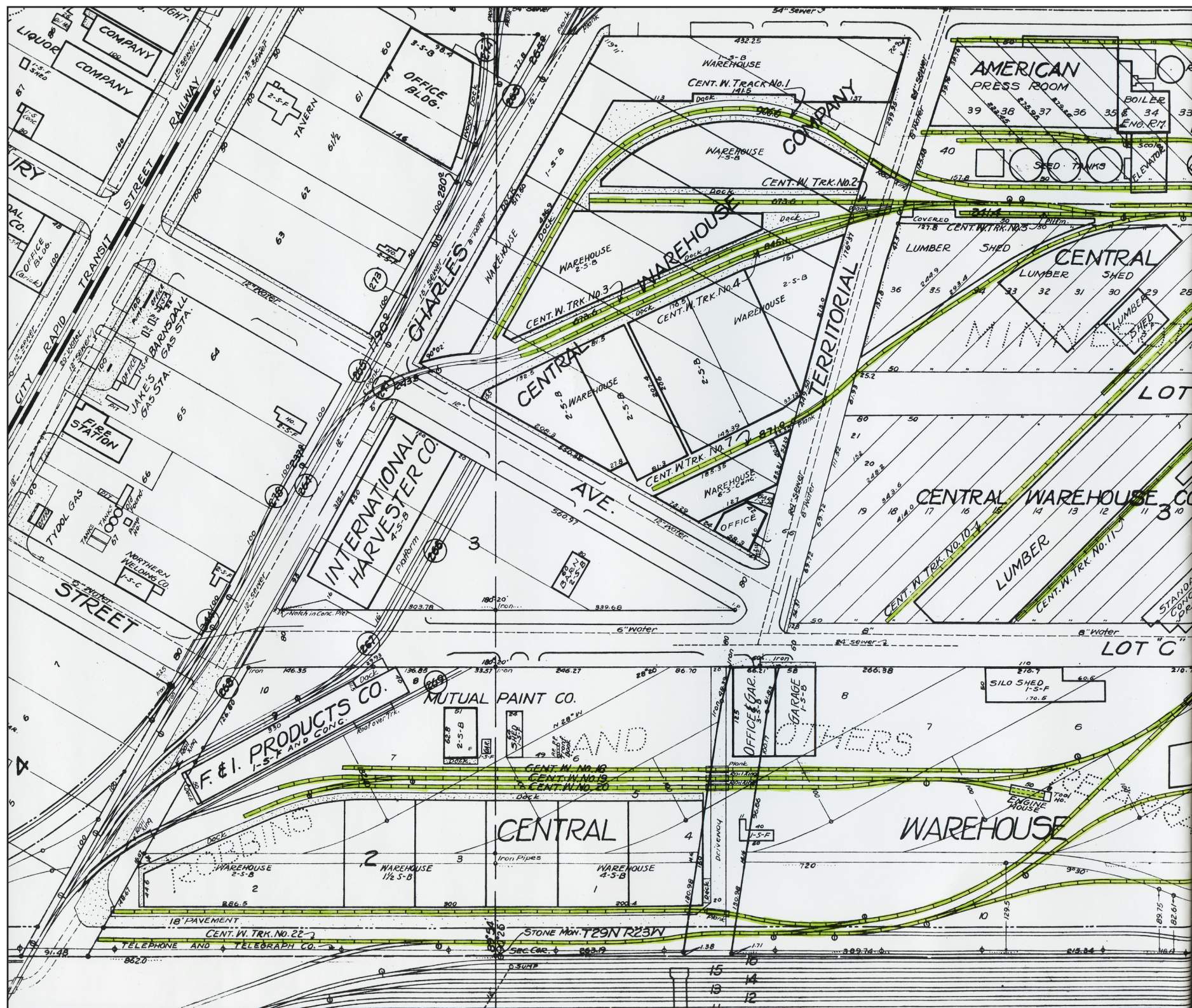
Above: The earliest photo we have is 1940 by Stephen D. Maguire and the steeplecab was mostly white, not the black of later years.
Below: The photographer is standing just north of the switch for tracks 9 and 10.



This map shows how the Central Warehouse's railroad (dashed lines) connected to the Minnesota Transfer's sprawling yards. Cars for the warehouses were pulled from the J Yard.

standard General Electric steeple cab locomotive. Its body design gave the motorman excellent ground visibility, which boxcab #100 did not. To really see what he was doing, the motorman

had to switch to the controls at the other end of the cab whenever he changed direction. Bratnober sent #100 to the Anoka line, where it lasted until 1966. It's now preserved at the







Above: Bill Olsen took the only known color photo of Central Warehouse. The train is on track 4, with track 3 in the foreground. Right: This is the rest of the rolling stock roster, a home-made tower car that looks a lot like our museum version.

Jackson Street Roundhouse.

Because it had to change directions all day long, which is awkward with trolley poles, the steeple cab used a pantograph to collect current from the overhead wire. The steeple cab proved to be the perfect switch engine; one-man operated, low maintenance and no coal smoke.

The centerfold map is fascinating to study in detail. It shows 24 numbered

tracks, all located along or east of the main switch lead at upper right. There are five more unnumbered tracks at the top of the map to serve non-Central Warehouse shippers.

There were four track connections with the Minnesota Transfer.

1. At upper right to the Transfer's R Yard. "R" stood for "car repair", so this connection was little used.

2. Track 22 at lower left connected to

the Transfer's J Yard, where cars destined for local industries were placed. Most cars were pulled from the J Yard connection to the north end of track, then shoved to where they were needed. From the photos it appears that the locomotive was always on the north end of the cars being switched.

3. Track 19 at lower left met the Transfer's Charles Street line.

4. Tracks 3 and 4 at left also met the

Transfer's Charles Street line. This connection looks like the Transfer had the ability to directly serve one of the warehouses. Or maybe the Transfer crew dropped its cars at the start of the overhead wire and the steeplecab took it the rest of the way, even if it was only a couple hundred feet. Those sorts of enforced boundaries were frequently a bureaucratic part of freight railroad-ing.

The steeplecab remained in service for 33 years. In 1951 it was replaced by a GE 44-ton center cab diesel and the overhead wires were removed.

It's unclear how long the Central Warehouse railroad lasted. It was still active when Russ published *Electric Railways of Minnesota* in 1976. Now it's entirely gone, along with Central Warehouse itself. The only remaining evidence is some vacant right of way and some buildings that are oddly angled to fit the railroad spurs.





Above: This is track 13, looking southeast toward the Minnesota Transfer's J Yard, where most of the freight cars were interchanged. The switch leads to tracks 18, 19 and 20 at right. The tower car is sitting on the former engine house stub track. Jim Kreuzberger photo.



Above: The steepcab is pulling a car from track 12. At left is a cut of cars sitting on track 13, probably waiting to be pushed down the Transfer interchange at the J Yard.



Above: A boy (maybe the late MSM member Norm Podas) poses on the footboards on track 3 by the warehouse loading dock.

Below: In 1951 the steplecab was replaced by this GE 44-ton diesel.



Almost electrified

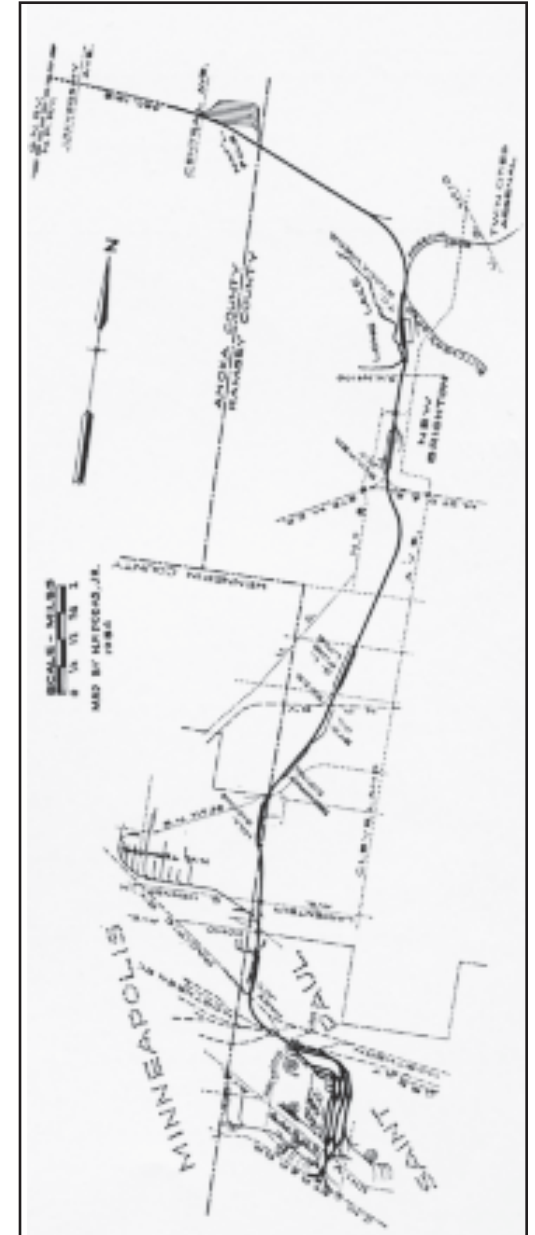
A city block away from the electrified Central Warehouse railroad sat the general offices of the Minnesota Transfer Railway. They had a firsthand view of the relative merits of steam power versus electric traction. In switching service, which was most of the Transfer's business, electricity is far superior to steam. A steam locomotive has the least power when it's trying to start a train moving, and only achieves max horsepower when it gets up to speed. That's just the opposite of what makes a good switch engine, which does nothing all day but start and stop at low speeds.

Electric locomotives get maximum horsepower when starting. Any electric can out-pull a steamer of the same weight. Electrics didn't need a fireman to tend the fire, or hostlers to refuel and keep steam up overnight. And electrics are clean--no smoke and pollution.

Put all those things together and in 1924 the Minnesota Transfer decided to study electrifying its railroad. They performed test runs to estimate tonnage hauling capability, train speed and fuel consumption.

The electrification never happened. The reason was probably the high capital cost. The main line to New Brighton would have required three substations. The huge Midway yards were up to 60 tracks wide in places, requiring enormous span wires suspended from steel towers that looked like suspension bridges.

Because it was owned in common by all the Twin Cities' main line railroads, all had to agree to



such an investment. They had just paid for the St. Paul Union Depot, which the Transfer also operated. Its cost had been unpopular with the less affluent lines, and that's probably what sunk the electrification.

Counterweight rules

From 1898 to 1907, Selby Avenue streetcars ascended and descended the steep hill between Summit Avenue and downtown with the help of a counterweight system. Former cable cars pushed the streetcars up the 16 percent grade and eased them down.

How did it work? MSM's collections of employee rule books yielded the answers. Here are the actual instructions to the operators of the counterweight cars and the streetcars that accompanied them. The capitalized sections are as they originally appeared. After reading this you can see why TCRT wanted to replace the counterweight with the Selby Tunnel.

All eastbound cars will be brought to a full stop before entering cross-over switches at the top of Selby hill and will not enter the cross-over switches at either top or bottom of hill without signal from the gripman and flagman.

The air brake will not be used between the cross-over switches at the top and foot of Selby hill. The hand brake is to be used within these limits. In case of emergency and to avoid an accident the air brake or current may be applied.

Under no conditions will grip cars be moved away from the top of the hill when there is a car going in either direction or standing on the east side of the derailing switch on the same track.

Should grip car leave top of hill without waiting for an approaching car the gripman must warn switchman by giving four loud taps on the gong, then proceed.

The track will be sanded from the grip cars frequently, that it may always be in a safe condition.

The conductor's position while cars are moving up or down the hill between cross-over switches will be on



A counterweight car eases a Selby-Lake streetcar down the hill. It looks like the wrong track, but both hill tracks were bi-directional.

the rear platform attending to the trolley and watching for signals from gripman in case of trouble.

No car will be operated on Selby Hill without the aid of a grip car, nor will more than one car be handled with one grip car at one time.

Eastbound trains AFTER HAVING RECEIVED SIGNAL FROM GRIPMAN AND SWITCHMAN AT DERAILING SWITCH will be operated carefully over cross-over switches and derailing switch until coming gently in contact with grip car. Passengers

will be allowed to board or leave car at this point.

After car has made contact with grip car the gripman will indicate that he is ready by giving two bells. After receiving proper signal from conductor the motorman will give two taps of gong which will be answered by gripman with two taps on the gong, then gripman and motorman will immediately apply current keeping it on until car has passed over the brow of the hill, from this point until approaching any avenue, gripman and motorman will

regulate speed by use of brakes and current, but motors are not to be thrown into multiple while going down the hill except in cases where grip is being run down alone.

The curve is to be approached cautiously. The car will be brought to a FULL STOP with the front end on the west line of Pleasant Avenue while motor and grip are still in contact. The gripman will do the greater part of the braking in making this stop. The car will not proceed after making his stop until grip has been dropped.

Passengers will be allowed to board or leave the car on the west side of Pleasant Avenue ONLY. No stop between west side of Pleasant Avenue and Smith Avenue eastbound.

"Westbound cars after receiving "come-ahead" signal from switchman or gripman will make no stop between Smith Avenue and the curve on the west side of Pleasant Avenue, where car will be brought to a FULL STOP, exercising every effort to not allow car to drop back.

Passengers will be allowed to leave the car at this point. Gripman will operate grip car gently to a point of contact with car and immediately if all is ready to proceed give two bells on his gong. Immediately, if all is clear, the conductor will give "go-ahead" signal to motorman. The motorman will respond with the usual two taps of the gong, to be given very loudly and distinctly.

Under NO CONDITIONS WILL GRIPMAN START HIS CAR AHEAD BEFORE RECEIVING THE SIGNALS FROM THE GONG ON THE MOTOR, and the motorman will be extremely careful not to give signals with the gong at this point before receiving same from conductor. Gripman will then apply current gradually and motorman will move controller "to end wire of series." As the car enters the curve the gripman will move controller onto the end wire and motorman will move his controller onto the "last notch of resistance in multiple" with W. P. motors and onto the "last notch" with G. E. motors. When within one car length of the brow of hill the current will be thrown off and car stopped with fender opposite manhole cover in the middle of Summit Avenue.

When running a single truck car without trailer, car will be stopped with fender opposite the center line of

boulevard on south side of Summit avenue. In making this stop the motorman will do the greater part of the braking and after the brake has been tightened, it will in no case be released until a full stop has been made. Passengers will be allowed to board or leave the car at this point.

Conductors will not give "go-ahead" signal at this point until after receiving two bells from gripman. No stop will be made between this point and Midway. Gripman will be very careful in operating grip car at the top of the hill as the counter weight is liable to pull it over the top of the hill.

On a single truck car without trailer westbound, current should be thrown off from the motors after leaving the curve, permitting the grip car to take the load alone to the top of the hill.

Gripman will "pick up" and "let go" the counter weight with great caution, bringing car to a FULL STOP while doing so. Westbound, in the event of grip car motors becoming disabled or trolley leaving the wire after entering the curve, give signal to stop, and everybody be on the alert to avoid collision.

It is absolutely necessary that all employees operating on the Selby hill be on the alert at all times. Cars must be operated in a safe and careful manner. No fast running will be allowed.

Gongs must be sounded when necessary. With open cars if crowded, passengers must be kept away from controller, allowing ample room to handle car. With trailers conductors will stand on the front platform of trailer at the brake where they may use the brake if necessary and watch the trolley. Cars moving down the hill on the north track MUST BE UNDER FULL CONTROL APPROACHING A STANDING CAR WESTBOUND. TOO MUCH CARE AND CAUTION CANNOT BE TAKEN.

A Motorman's memories

-John Winger

This oral history by motorman John Winger was printed in the Metro Transit employee newsletter in 1974. Winger, then age 85, had run streetcars out of Lake Street and North Side Stations from 1911 to 1951. John Alt Winger was born in Limelighter, Norway In 1886. He came to Wisconsin with his parents in 1887 and settled near Lacrosse.

The latter part of June 1911, I got a letter from my cousin, Carl Matheson, in Minneapolis. He was working as a conductor on the Twin City Lines. He wrote. "Come up for a visit during the Fourth of July. They are having a big celebration here for the whole week. You can stay with me, and if you want work they are looking for men to work on the streetcars."

By this time I was pretty well fed up with the sporadic work at the mills. I said to myself. "Believe me, the next job is going to be a steady one." I didn't realize it at the time, but it sure turned out to be true. On the streetcar job it was every day in the month, and you practically had to be ready for a coffin to get a day off.

I had a little money saved up. and I knew that the mills shut down for about ten days during the Fourth of July. It was a vacation without pay. I told the mark-up man not to put me on the "ticket" until I showed up.

Off I went to the big city. I took a train, got off at the Milwaukee depot, and saw almost as many streetcars at a glance as there were in the whole city of LaCrosse. I got around pretty well for a stranger, hunted for Carl's address, then went to the Lake Street streetcar station to wait for him to get through work, which was not too long.

He explained to me about the cele-



John Winger at the start of his 40-year career.

bration and said they had dug a channel between the Lake of the Isles and Lake Calhoun and had built a replica of a Viking ship to ply both lakes. Of course, I did not know much about the city. The streetcar company at that time put out a map showing all the lines and their routes. Carl gave me one. I would pick out a place I wanted to go, get up into the front of the car, and watch where it was headed.

July 4th at Lake Harriet

Carl could not go with me as he had to work. On the day of the Fourth I went out to Lake Harriet. They had a big float out in the lake from which to send up fireworks. There was a big bandstand on the shore. Nearly everyone rode the streetcars out there.

It was quite an event. Hundreds of canoes, so it seemed, were on the lake. They had contraptions to hold up lighted Japanese lantern in the canoes, very picturesque. Then came the beautiful fireworks. That was the biggest

crowd of people I had ever seen short of the State Fair. The estimate was about 100,000 people, and when the fireworks lit up the lake, all you could see was faces all around the lake.

The Como-Harriet line was the only line by the lake. You can get an idea of the jam of people when I tell you that it took me one hour and twenty minutes to get through the crowd, starting at the pavilion a short distance from the line. Actually you didn't get through the crowd, you just stayed in the jam till you got to the car line.

There was no union of car employees in those days, and it was easy for a foreman to get extra service. I heard that every night-run crew was ordered to make a trip out to Lake Harriet after the conclusion of their run and haul a load either to the loop or across Lake Street. If they refused they likely got their walking papers the next day.

I also witnessed an incident that I never forgot. A couple of weeks before this event the city council had passed a "strap-hanger law." Seventy two people were considered a load. As I was about to get on the car, a young man sitting with his girl friend in the car was shooting off his mouth that 72 was a load. There was not a front entrance in those days, just a metal step for the motorman to enter. They were loading three cars at a time, and had policemen helping to load people in through the front end. There was a man in some kind of uniform up and down in front of the car. I found out later he was a car inspector named Glennie. He was so infuriated by this man spouting off, that since he could not get into the car from the front or rear because at the jam of people, he climbed in an open window over the top of the people, grabbed this man and shoved him out through the window.

I saw the victim collecting witnesses so I suppose he sued. I thought to

myself, "You better keep your mouth shut around here. They treat 'em rough."

I heard later it took until 3 AM to get that mob of people home. I guess the streetcar company made far more money those days at five cents apiece than they have made ever since. I got back to Carl's room about 1 AM.

Hiring on

Thus began about forty years on the streetcars, with time out for 21 months in World War I.

My cousin told me to ask for the interurban extra list, a special extra list for Selby-Lake and Snelling-Minnehaha lines, if they hired me. He said I would get a regular run much quicker. He was quite right. He had worked extra for two years on the "locals" before he got a regular run.

They had built the Lake Street station only three years earlier and the Lake Street crosstown line was put in operation only a couple of years earlier. It went all across Lake Street and into the loop in St. Paul. Ridership was heavy, and they kept adding runs, so that helped.

I am getting ahead of my story. The first thing on Monday morning after the celebration I went to the streetcar company's employment office at Snelling and University in St. Paul. I applied and after a few questions, was hired. I was asked my preference as to conductor or motorman and I said, "Motorman," which was granted.

I bought myself a straw uniform cap and got a round student badge. I thought I looked pretty good in that cap.

Next I was put on a car with a regular motorman named Andrew Larson, a very patient and good instructor. He suggested I apply for a room where he was rooming at 3121 22nd Avenue South, a half block from the Lake

Street Station,

It was a large residence owned by John Swanson. He was shop foreman at the station. A contractor had built it for him for \$3,000. It had four bedrooms upstairs and one down, a large living room, kitchen, and a front porch. There was an outside entrance to the upstairs which was handy for roomers. We paid three dollars a week for room and laundry.

There were three restaurants near the station. Meals were about twenty cents for breakfast, twenty-five to thirty-five cents for dinner, and about twenty-five cents for supper. One was run by a former waiter at Scheik's, a well-known restaurant that closed only about a year ago. Competition was pretty keen.

I had to work as a student for three weeks at ten cents an hour. The instructor got ten cents an hour extra. I was nearly broke by the time I received my student pay. I then had to buy a uniform for \$12, which later went up to \$16. It was of 16-ounce gray wool buttoned right up to the chin. It had brass buttons and was way too warm and uncomfortable. I mentioned a straw cap, but it was only a thin strip of straw around the lower edge. Otherwise it was all wool and pretty warm. In winter it had only a couple of eyelets on the side. On the front we had a large badge with a big number on it. My first number was 2109.

Rooming at Swanson's were the following; George Ferry, my room partner; Axel Anderson; Andrew Larson George Bradley, Mr. Coyne. the night shop foreman; also a Mr. Berg, Mrs. Swanson's brother. Later on there was Edwin Fredlund, who became the second husband of Bernice Swanson the daughter.

It was quite a gang. Until I got married, I never realized all the work that was piled on Mrs. Swanson. To accom-

modate us they even had the phone upstairs, and she would have to run up there to answer it. We should have chipped in and installed an extension downstairs, but we were just a bunch of thoughtless bachelors. Several were avid duck hunters and would come home with twenty-five ducks each. Then she would pluck and fix an individual duck for dinner for each roomer.

The trouble with that Interurban extra list was that whatever line you fell regular on, you had to stay on. I was hoping I would fall regular on the Snelling-Minnehaha line because Selby-Lake was a workhorse. Carl was right. A man on Selby bumped a car and was promptly fired. I fell regular on his run and had to stay on Selby-Lake for ten years before the rules were changed.

I had worked the extra list about two months. A man called up sick about 11 PM and since there were no extra men on the "bench" that time of night and I was close by, I got called to take the Selby owl run. I had slept poorly the night before and worked some during the day. I had barely gone to bed. I got up in time to get a bite to eat (Restaurants were open all night).

I relieved the night run man about 1:10 AM. Coming out of St. Paul on the 3 AM lineup I approached the east end of the viaduct over railroad tracks two blocks east of Snelling Avenue. I was terribly sleepy and fell asleep as the car slowed going up the east end of the viaduct. Our seat had a single leg sitting in a socket in the floor. I cursed them more than once because they were so wobbly. In this case the stool saved me. As I came over the brow of the viaduct, the stool tipped me forward and I woke up. I saw some red lights ahead of me, some as high as my car. At first I couldn't figure out what it was, but soon I made out the outline of



Lake Street Station in the 1920s, when John Winger worked there.

a wire car. A wire car is a flat car with a small fenced platform that could be raised or lowered so men could get up high enough to repair a trolley wire. They usually carried a large spool of copper wire on the car. While traveling the men rode in the cab. This was the drab object with the red lights on it ahead of me. I had the controller on full power. It was only two blocks to Snelling Avenue where it would stop, throw a switch, and pull into Snelling station. I shut off power at once and applied brakes. With full power I would have plowed into that car within seconds. I had only a couple of passengers on my car. Even if that car had gone onto Snelling Avenue and left the switch open. I would have gone all over the place.

I guess I was not the only one to go to sleep on a car. I heard of a Stillwater car that had gone off a curve and into a marsh. The Stillwater cars usually traveled in pairs. The leader carried lights to indicate he had a follower. They had special motors that could travel sixty miles an hour like the cars

we had going to Lake Minnetonka.

The follower came in and the motor-man was asked "Where is your leader?"

"I didn't see him," he said.

They went back to investigate and found it had gone off a curve and so far into the marsh that the man behind did not even see him.

Also a man working an owl run out of Lake Street acting as a good Samaritan helping his neighbor move didn't get his sleep and ran into a car at 36th and Lake. He got it nearly stopped so did not do much damage, but bumping a car was a sure discharge.

At the streetcar company we had a pick according to seniority once a month. When I fell regular, I had only two choices left. One run started at 12:30 weekdays and 11:30 on Saturdays and Sundays. It was 85 hours a week, straight platform time. There was no pay for getting your car ready, fixing the fire, etc. You were paid from the time you got the car rolling on the main line. This was later

changed. Of course the longer hours I worked the more I made, but at 21 cents an hour it did not count up fast.

Working conditions were pretty lousy. We did not have windshield wipers, and when it rained all we could see on the window glass were those shiny drops of rain. To remedy this I carried a plug of tobacco with me. By cutting a slice and rubbing it on the glass, I could make the water run off in a clear sheet.

We had no frost shields at first. The windows would frost up. I carried a sharp scraper and a bag of salt which I would rub on the window, but it wasn't long before it would frost over again.

Later, we got frost shields, but if they leaked we were worse off than ever because we could not get at the glass to clear it. Many times we would have to tear off the shield in order to see. Yet, we were supposed to keep out of trouble.

I developed a bad reputation with the shopmen. I was fussy about the air valves. Sometimes they would get

water in them and they would stick. One morning as I was about to pull out a car, I asked a big shopman to oil the valve. This involved draining all the air from the tank and took a little time. He got peeved because he was about to go off duty. He got a can with kerosene in it instead of the heavy valve oil. I did not notice it until I got on the line. The valve was sticking worse than ever. By pressing down on the valve and releasing some air you could sometimes get oil on the valve plate. When I did this you could smell kerosene all over the place. I called an inspector over and brought it to his attention.

I guess the man got called on it and was mad at me ever since. Those shop crews pulled a lot of dirty tricks on me. The heat in the cars consisted of a hard coal furnace located at the center of the car near the right side. There were hot air pipes in the car, a stove pipe running along the floor to an upright pipe in the front. For some reason this furnace was not built very tight. When the shopman built a new fire in one, they pulled it into the yard and started the fire with wood kindling, and left the doors open because the car filled with smoke until they got a good fire going. I don't know whether the night foreman marked up the car for me to pull out on the "owl," but if I saw a black stream on the floor near where the pipe went upright, I knew the pipe was clogged and it was almost impossible to get a hot fire. Most of the draft went directly into the body of the car. You wouldn't see smoke because it was a hard coal fire but there were fumes. I guess they were hoping I would get sleepy from the fumes and crash into something.

Many of those cars I should have refused to take out, but then there would have been some more growling. It got so that I would check the brake

cylinders for slack brakes. Sometimes I refused to take them out until they were tightened, but there was not always time. Sometimes on a cold night the car would be pulled out in the yard and coming from over those steam pits, the windows would be all white with frost. You couldn't see a thing until you used a scraper to clear them off. Well, the company was partly to blame for the poor maintenance because they ran the shop with as few men as possible. I don't think they would get away with that today.

One day I inadvertently got an unintended revenge on the shop crew. As I was pulling my car in one morning, the controller blistered making it impossible to feed the car more than two notches of power. This happened when I was only a block or so from the station. I knew what the problem was and had I been out on the line I would have fixed it myself. This time I took a defect card and wrote it up for the shop crews.

I wasn't there to see what happened the next morning, but I later heard what occurred. In leaving the yard the motorman seldom put the controller on more than second notch. It seems that a new motorman took this same car and on getting on Lake Street discovered he couldn't get it past second notch. Not knowing what was wrong, he abandoned the car and walked back to the station to get help. In the meantime cars were pulling out of the yard every couple minutes. By the time that car was fixed there was a block and a half of cars delayed in getting out on the line.

I suppose the shopmen looking over the defect cards that night spotted mine and thought, "Oh, that Winger, he is always complaining about a rough controller or something. Let's forget it." No doubt someone was called on the carpet for that one, and I

am sure they immediately checked whether I had marked the defect. If not, I would have been the goat.

The Selby Tunnel

One cold winter day, ten below zero, I was approaching Seven Corners in St. Paul on 4th Street. A Selby car was stopped on the east side of Seven Corners facing me. All at once the back end of this car seemed to explode. What I hadn't noticed was a runaway car coming down the tunnel and hitting the rear of this car. It was about 8 AM, the height of the rush hour. The next thing I knew the car had travelled a short block and stopped in front of me. What a mess, There was one window left in the Selby car, and someone broke that. The body of the car sat askew on the tracks. I went around to the back of the car. A man was lying on the ground. He had been on the back platform before lighting a cigar. It was so cold that most passengers were inside. Another man and I carried him into a building. The motorman on that Selby car was shoved through the front bulkhead which separated the cab from the passenger area. He had both legs broken. Evidently his brakes failed and he got panicky and forgot to pull the reverse.

After the accident at Seven Corners the company made a rule that if your car became crippled, you were to pull down the trolley and wait for the following car to couple up. They did not require unloading passengers. It was just my luck to come upon such a crippled car at the top of the tunnel. It was a spare Minnetonka car which with its high speed motors was heavier than my standard car. The Tonka cars were regularly assigned to the suburban service where they frequently attained speeds of over 60 MPH. Occasionally one would show up on a local line during the rush hour. So there I was at the

west portal of the tunnel contemplating how to wind my way downgrade through the bore with an extra 50,000 pounds connected to the head end of my car. This tunnel was 1500 feet long, with a 7 percent grade. There was a curve at the foot of the grade so you couldn't see what was beyond. The Tonka car had about 25 passengers on board. I asked the green extra crew if they had the handbrake set. They said, "yes."

As I started into the tunnel, I gradually applied the brakes, but the cars kept gaining speed. The rail was dry, and I did not like to reverse the motors for fear of flattening all the wheels. As the cars did not slow up, I realized I would have to use the reverse. The men in the front car were both turning the wheel on that worthless handbrake. The rule was that if you could not stop with the brakes, you should use the reverse and put the controller on two notches. I did that; the cars gave a little jerk but still kept going. I gave the controller half speed. Still no results. So I threw it over to parallel, the beginning of full speed, and to my surprise the overhead switch did not cut out. It acted like a fuse when too much power was used. I got alarmed since there was a crossing just below the curve and one more before I came to Seven Corners. I had the wheels spinning backwards at full speed and the cars were going about 25 MPH. I pulled down the whistle. People in the front car began to get uneasy. As luck would have it nothing was in the way, I heard later that the traffic cop at Seven Corners had cleared the intersection for me. Fortunately I got the cars stopped on the near side of Seven Corners.

The next morning the Pioneer Press had a big headline, "A runaway in the Tunnel." If I had been sure nothing was in the way, I could have sailed through

and the passengers would not have known the difference, but my blowing the whistle made them realize I was out of control. I am very thankful we did not kill anyone.

Some tough experiences

On New Year's Eve the company put out a special schedule so that instead of pulling a car out of North Side and going south, I relieved a night run man and went north. It was about ten below zero. When I got to 52nd and Bryant and wyed out, I saw that a drunk had made a mess between the seats. I opened the door, slipped my changer from its place near the fare-box, and got a shovelful of sand and a broom to clean it up. While I was doing this, three young kids, one of them a big, fat guy, came in the back door.

I said, "I'll be with you in a minute boys."

The fat one walked around behind me, reached his arm around me, and stuck a revolver in my ribs. He grabbed my changer. I said, "You don't need that transfer punch."

Well, he didn't take the punch. But I had to stop at Camden and report the incident to the policeman on duty and then stop at the station to pick up a changer and count out borrowed change. By this time I was running fifteen minutes late. The dispatcher told me he would have a car pull out and go north on my time. When we met we were supposed to change cars. Well, he must have had trouble finding a man because the fill in car went out late. The other motorman evidently was in a rush so he didn't check the fire or coal supply. When we met, I inherited a cold car and wasted more time getting that fire going.

I was as late as ever mopping up a 30-minute headway instead of fifteen minutes. When I came back from the

south end, they had pulled out another car to put me back on time. But this one was also late and had a poor fire. I had to stop and copy two fare registers again, losing more time. I was terribly cold and the passengers were complaining about the cold car.

On a 5 AM trip leaving the loop a couple got on at Seven Corners. The man was a big guy and was drunk. She put in her token but he literally threw his at the fare box. It fell on the floor. I looked for it but couldn't find it. I went back to him and said, "I am supposed to have two tokens in the farebox." She took a token to give me, but he grabbed it and reached up to hit me. I had a lot of regular passengers on that trip, and some of them ganged up on this guy and threw him out the front door. I heard he was an ex-con. Someone went into a telephone booth and called the police. They took him away and I didn't see him for a couple of months. When I pulled in that morning, I cashed in as much money as any day run man. I had about six trip sheets to fill out and I was about frozen.

On the Fourth of July I got held up again. This time at 52nd Avenue North and Bryant. I was sitting on the peanut row on the left side of the car. There were screens on that side. The bandit decided he could not grab my changer through the window so he walked around to the front door. I went up front and held the door shut while looking him over.

When I did open it, he said, "Turn around."

He had seen me looking him over.

The wye at 52nd Avenue N. and Bryant had vacant lots on both sides, making it a prime spot for a late night holdup. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

He was pulling a gun out of his pocket. It was one of those sticky nights, and the lining of his pocket was coming out with his gun. That slow draw could have been dangerous for him if I had been armed.

I could have hit him with my monkey wrench but was afraid to move. He reached into my left coat pocket, thinking I would have paper money there, but he only found a few pennies. I did have a couple bills in my right pocket, but he didn't try that. He got about ten dollars.

Next time it was in August. I had just let several passengers off. They had scarcely crossed the empty lot there when two young men dressed in overalls and jackets lined up outside the front door and both pointed guns at me. They also made off with about ten dollars.

Twenty-one motormen had now been held up. I would have been held up a fourth time except that I picked a different owl. The man that picked my run got held up at 37th and Washington North by what was called the Silk Bag bandits. Two of them would stop a car. One would throw a small silk bag into the cab and say, "put your money in it or else."

The heat was getting on the police department on account of all the holdups. One night a detective got on my car at 52nd and Bryant North and told me they knew who the men were, where they lived, but they had to catch them in the act to be sure of conviction. He said they lived on Glenwood Avenue.

The police decided to stake out the Glenwood owl. It was summer. A detective rode on the long seat just

behind the front door, and there was a police car a block behind, Sure enough, a man stepped up to stop the car. As soon as the door was opened, he shot into the ceiling saying, "This is a holdup."

The detective reached his hand out the window and shot him dead. The police car came up then.

They rolled him over and said, "Yeah it's Smith. Let's go back and wait for his brother."

The brother came in about an hour later, and they picked him up, too. Their mother had a whole purse full of coins that they had picked up.

I got so nervous about holdups that every time a man took his hand from his pocket to bring up a token, I expected a gun to come up with it. I still would not quit the owl. I guess I worked owl runs for fifteen years.



To Lake Minnetonka by Postcard

Editor's note: There's more color in this issue because our new printer has offered us eight color pages for the same price we used to pay for four pages. Enjoy.



Above: This is really light rail in its 1906 incarnation, somewhere in Minnetonka. This is where the small group of high speed suburban cars cruised at 60 mph.
Below: The line crossed Purgatory Creek just east of Highway 101 in Minnetonka.



Above: This may be the crossing of Meadowbrook Lake on the boundary between Edina and St. Louis Park. Below: We don't know the location, but it's probably somewhere in Minnetonka. Note the arc light hanging from the feeder wire. The line was lit from 34th Street to Excelsior and TCRT dubbed it "The Great White Way".





Above: The Fair Oaks bridge carried St. Albans Bay Road over the tracks east of Excelsior. The streetcar line is now Highway 7 through here. A short stub siding diverges at right.

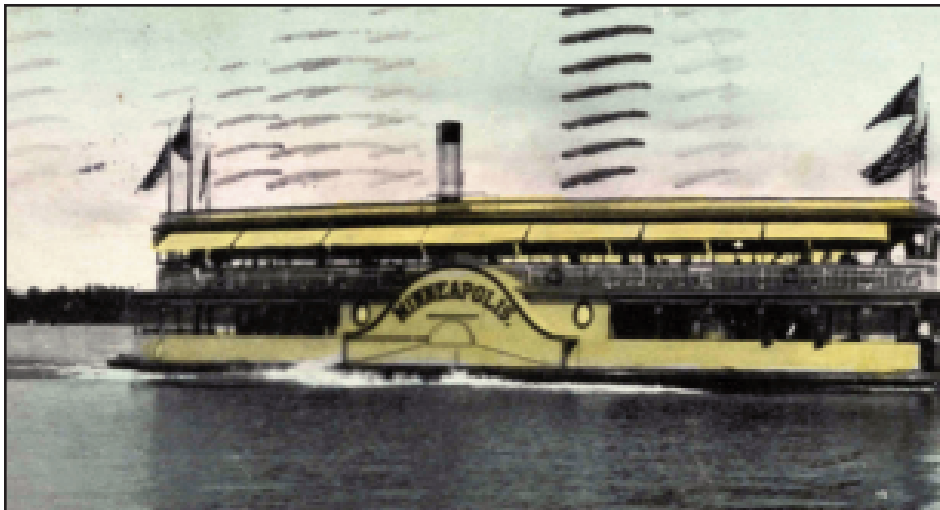
Below: This is the Excelsior Dock Station. It's after 1912, because the boats have received upper deck canopies and are being routed continuously to all points up and down the lake. Note the departure time clocks.



Above: The Excelsior Dock Station, with the three Big Island ferries lined up.

Below: The seven express boats were named Como, Minnehaha, White Bear, Harriet, Stillwater, Excelsior and Hopkins. This is about 1910. Note the paint damage along the side from scraping docks. Only the Hopkins survived the end of express boat service, lasting until 1949 in private excursion service.





Above: The three Big Island ferries were Minneapolis, St. Paul and Minnetonka. This is how they appeared the first year. However, their freeboards were too low, causing the deck to be awash. They were rebuilt over the winter with raised lower decks, completely different paddle wheel covers, and were painted white.

Below: The Big Island dock, with a ferry discharging. At left is the Plymouth. It predated TCRT, who purchased it along with three other older steamboats. They ran all-day lake tours until those were discontinued about 1912.



Above: Big Island, seen from a ferry approaching the dock. The park featured picnic grounds, concerts and a roller coaster. The tall building is a water tower with a light beacon at the top. At the dock is the steamer Excelsior, another of the pre-TCRT boats purchased for tour service.

Below: In 1905 TCRT purchased and electrified the Milwaukee Road's branch to Deephaven. It was a much quieter operation than the Excelsior main line. The caption says Gibbs Lake, but this appears to be today's Libb's Lake, east of Highway 101.





Above: TCRT hired commercial photographer Sweet to photograph all the boats, and their portrait of Minnehaha became a colorized postcard.

Below: In 1908 TCRT leased the Minneapolis & St. Louis' Tonka Bay branch and built a spur to a new dock at Wildhurst. This became the transfer point to the Spring Park and Zumbra upper lake routes, shortening travel times from Excelsior and reducing the boat requirement by one. This is a later view, when the boats were scheduled for continuous routing up and down the lake.



Above: Starting in 1913, continuous routing brought express boats through the Narrows, after an absence of four years.

Below: Shady Island was an intermediate stop on the Zumbra Heights route.



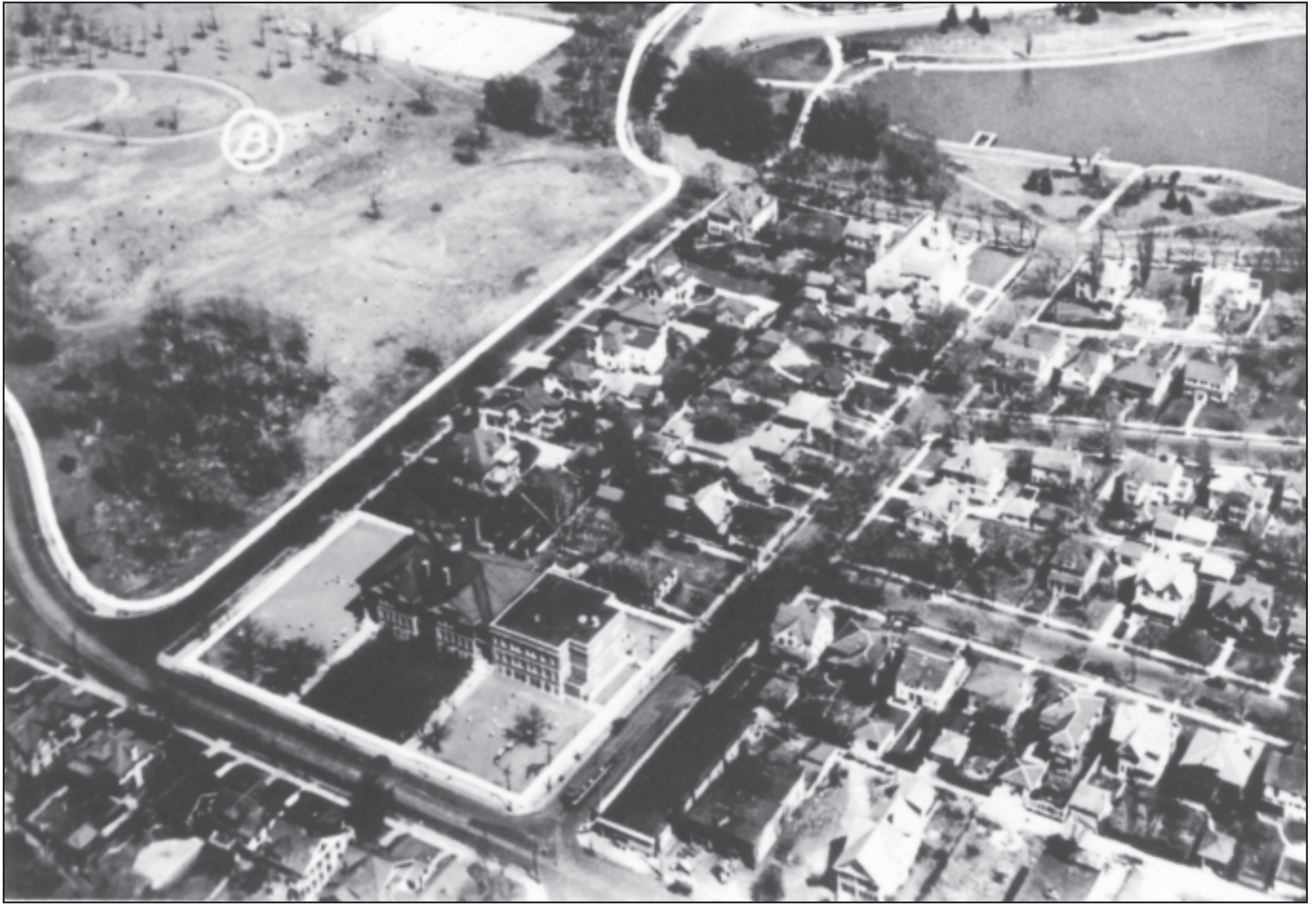
Four lines that abandoned early--viewed from the air

In the late 1930s TCRT converted several of its most lightly traveled streetcar lines to bus. Kenwood and St. Louis Park quit on the same day in 1938. Bryn

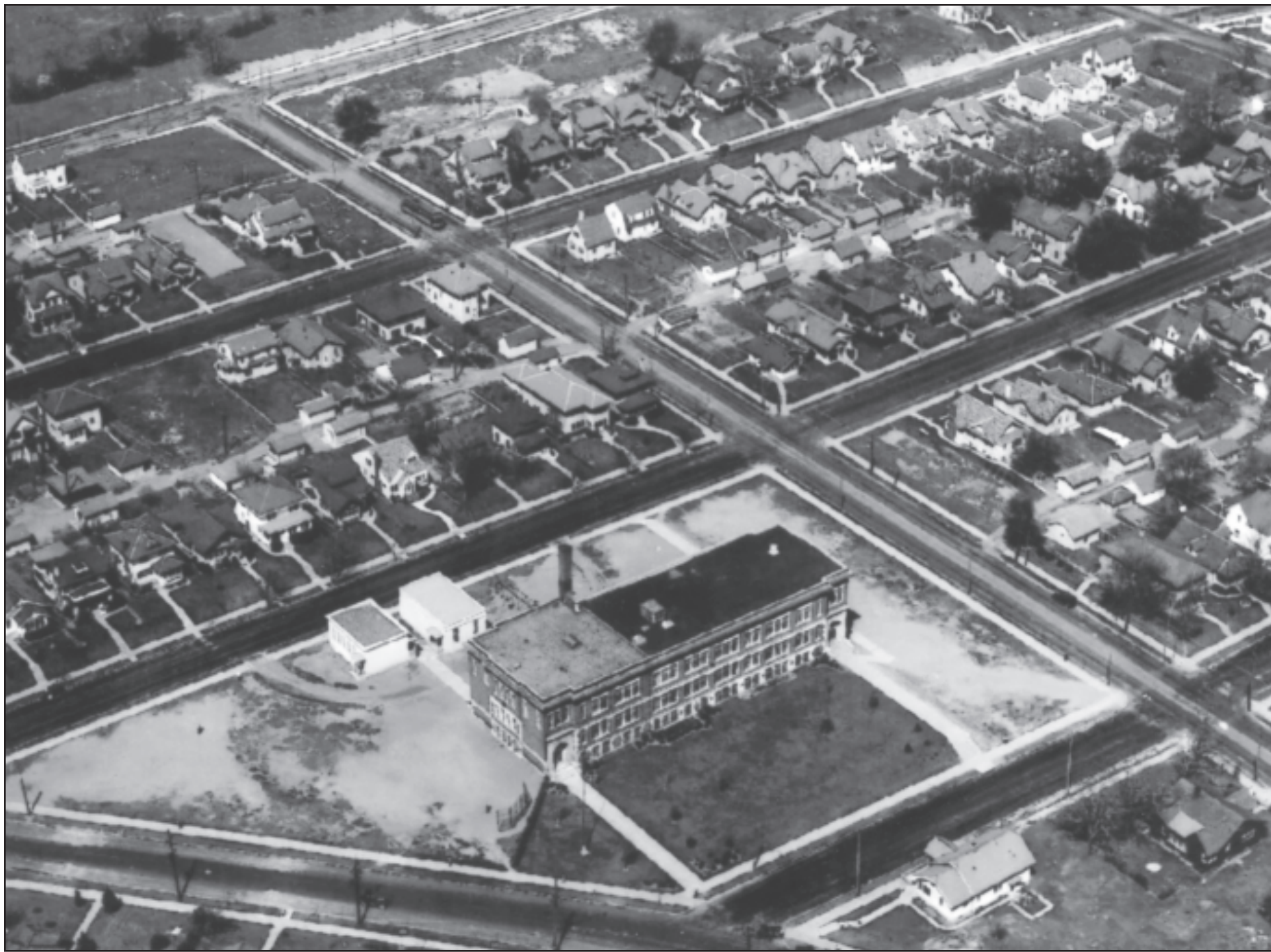
Mawr followed in 1939 and Franklin Avenue in 1940. Because they quit so early, photos of these lines are quite rare. The following photos became available recently. All are by Joseph Quigley, taken in 1928-1930 for the Minneapolis Public Schools.

With Lake Calhoun at upper right, a St. Louis Park car crosses the Lake Street viaduct spanning the Milwaukee Road and the Minneapolis & St. Louis. Hopefully, the railroad right of way will soon see construction started on the Southwest light rail line.





Above: A Kenwood car lays over at the bottom of the photo, on the wye at 21st Street and Penn Avenue South, next to Kenwood School. Lake of the Isles is at upper right. Opposite: A Bryn Mawr car headed for downtown occupies the single track on Laurel Avenue at Thomas Avenue, a block from the end of the line.





This is the east end of the Franklin Avenue line. After crossing the Mississippi, it terminated at 27th & Yale Avenue SE, where it shared a wye with the Oak-Harriet line. Three streetcars are visible on and near the wye.



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

PO Box 16509
Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509
www.TrolleyRide.org

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